



State Senator • 38th District



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to provide this Spring newsletter as part of an effort to keep in touch with you regarding the actions of the Michigan State Legislature, especially those issues that impact you most. It is a privilege to represent those of you who reside in Michigan's 38th Senate District, stretching from Ironwood to Luce County and from Copper Harbor to Menominee. My colleagues and I in the Michigan Senate are working on an agenda in 2006 that impacts both our communities and our daily lives, looking for ways to grow the economy and make Michigan a better and safer place to live, work, and play.

We have worked hard to pull Michigan through tough economic times, while at the same time attempting to maintain vital services. It's been a tough balancing act. Cutting billions in a four-year span hasn't been easy, but we are beginning to see results and Michigan is beginning to move forward. We have incentivized new businesses startups and expansions, offered workers better wage and health care benefits, and utilized dwindling state funds to invest in education, preparing our children to compete in the New Economy and urging our most talented and skilled workers to take a second look at this Great State.

Keeping informed of your thoughts and opinions about issues before the Legislature is extremely important to me. I encourage you to contact me with any concerns you might have about those things that are important to you or that impact your daily life. You can reach my office toll-free at 1-866-305-2038, or by mail via 515 Farnum Building, P.O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909-7536. In addition, please feel free to sign up for my monthly Capitol UPdate E-Newsletter at www.senate.mi.gov/prusi.

Thank you for your continued support. It is a privilege and an honor to serve as your State Senator in Lansing.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL A. PRUSI
State Senator • 38th District

UPEMS

The 2006 Executive Budget for the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) called for the elimination of an ongoing MDCH contract with U.P. Emergency Management System (UPEMS) and Southwest Michigan Systems (SWMS). These two agencies have contracted with MDCH for nearly 26 years to provide training and other services to first responders throughout the state. UPEMS effectively coordinates the education, testing, and training of ambulance personnel, first responders, and volunteers in the U.P., and also conducts inspections of the state's ambulance fleet.

I strongly believed elimination of this contract would have had a detrimental impact on both the individuals and agencies served by

UPEMS and on the coordination and delivery of emergency services in many remote, underserved areas of the state. This is especially true given the long travel and harsh winter weather conditions in the U.P. MDCH had proposed eliminating the contract with UPEMS and SWMS, and instead hiring six civil service staffers to handle the statewide EMS training and examination duties via their Lansing office. This would have more than likely resulted in a service reduction of approximately 50-percent. While I normally prefer having state employees do as much as possible, the overwhelming sentiment from the EMS community was to maintain the service delivery as is.

After several months of my continued efforts with my

Upper Peninsula colleagues, including Representatives Rich Brown, Steve Adamini, and Gary McDowell, the contract needed for UPEMS to remain in operation will be renewed. I commend Governor Granholm for stepping up to the plate on behalf of U.P. residents and directing the MDCH to reconsider an earlier decision to eliminate the contract and reorganize these services internally. U.P. residents in remote rural areas of the state deserve the same access to emergency services that are available in other communities across Michigan. I am pleased to have been part of this service restoration.

Jobs Today Transportation Initiative

Recently introduced legislation to implement the Governor’s Local Jobs Today initiative, namely Senate Bill 1132. As it was proposed by Governor Granholm, the initiative is aimed at stimulating the economy by accelerating local transportation projects across the state. A Senate colleague subsequently introduced SB 1192, a bill that would add legislative oversight and other requirements to the local bond initiative, making it a bipartisan package.

The Local Jobs Today plan will provide bond proceeds and grants to cities, counties, and local transit agencies, enabling them to take advantage of available federal transportation funding. By providing local municipalities the opportunity to accelerate critical local road, bridge, and transit projects, this initiative has the potential to create more than 7,100 jobs in Michigan in 2006 and 2007.



- Under the plan, \$80 million of the State Transportation Fund (STF) monies will be used to assist locals’ the required 20-percent match required for federal funding. This will leverage \$320 million in local/federal funds. The state will fund the program by issuing bonds to be repaid with future STF funds.
- The state will issue short-term notes under the Advanced Construct Local Loan Program, backed by the STF, to accelerate the use of federal transportation dollars by creating a pool of funds local agencies can access to construct federally eligible projects. These loans will be repaid with federal revenues coming to Michigan for local projects over the next three years. Local agencies will be responsible for paying back interest on the short-term loans as well as additional costs, including overruns.
- Grants to provide match dollars on local transit projects – equal to their 20-percent federal match requirement – will be made out of available Comprehensive Transportation Fund money.

Michigan’s local road and transit systems are an integral part of our transportation infrastructure. This program is designed to provide local agencies the resources necessary to make much-needed improvements, while at the same time create new jobs. I am hopeful that my colleagues in the Legislature will

pass this bipartisan package in a timely fashion, allowing local governments to have shovels in the ground this construction season.

Preliminary lists of locally selected projects will be submitted by the County Road Association of Michigan, the Michigan Municipal League, and the Michigan Public Transit Association. The Department of Transportation will review the list to ensure that projects meet Local Jobs Today criteria and comply with federal funding requirements. To qualify, required non-construction activities such as preliminary engineering work, environmental clearances, or right-of-way acquisition must be at or near completion.

Priority will be given to:

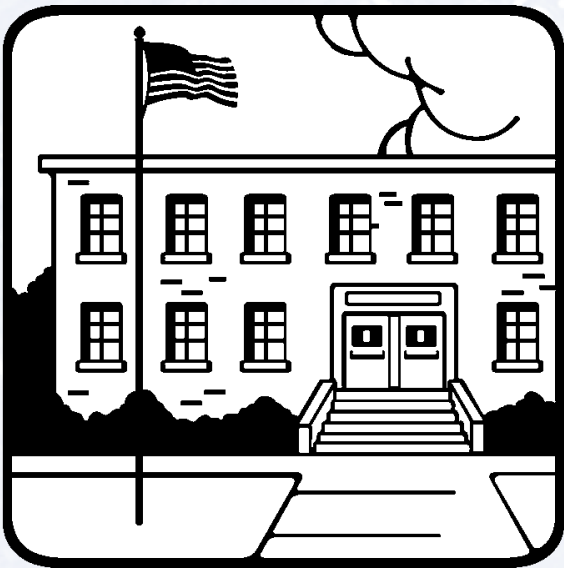
- locally selected projects specifically identified for funding in SAFETEA-LU that are ready to be constructed in 2006 or 2007;
- locally selected federal aid projects scheduled for construction in 2007 that can be advanced to construction in 2006;
- locally selected federal aid projects scheduled for construction in 2008 that can be advanced to 2007; and,
- locally selected transit construction projects such as passenger facilities and bus maintenance garages specifically identified for funding in federal legislation.

New High School Curriculum

The new rigorous high school curriculum that was just approved requires that all students complete four years of math and English language arts; three years of science and social studies; two years of foreign language; one year of physical education and health; one year of visual, performing, or applied arts; and one online learning experience in order to graduate from high school. The requirements will be in place for incoming eighth graders in the fall of 2006. The foreign language requirement, which can be met by coursework completed prior to high school, will be in place for students entering third grade in the fall of 2006.

In addition to setting high standards for our students, we must also ensure that our schools and our

teachers have the resources they need to help students meet those standards. My proposed budget for the upcoming school year increases education funding to its highest levels ever, increasing



per-pupil funding by \$200; it institutes a new a f t e r-school math and science program for middle schools to ensure that students are prepared for a rigorous high school curriculum; and it proposes a significant expansion of early childhood education services to get young students started in the right direction.

The new curriculum requirements recently approved by both chambers will help establish a highly educated, highly skilled workforce.

■ Prusi Leads the Way in Statewide Fire Service Package

Will Streamline Emergency Management & Strengthen Homeland Security

A group of Michigan lawmakers and firefighting professionals gathered at the State Capitol to announce a bipartisan legislative package I spearheaded that would establish a new Bureau of Fire Services. The 25-bill package is intended to consolidate fire fighting resources and promote more effective and efficient fire fighting techniques within the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG).

Michigan’s firefighters, fire chiefs, and other members of fire service play a vital role in protecting the health, safety, and welfare of citizens across the state and I am proud to have authored the lead bill in the package. This package of bills will put into law the Governor’s earlier Executive Directive to consolidate resources and strengthen Michigan’s emergency management and homeland security efforts.

The fire package will, among other things, establish a Bureau of Fire Services headed by the State Fire Marshall. The legislation follows immediately on a new agency that would be responsible for the fire service-related aspects of the state’s homeland security and emergency response. An Executive Directive issued last November by Governor Granholm ordered that planning begin. This is an important, long overdue legislative initiative. With this legislation we are making it a priority to empower our first

responders and support them in their efforts to protect the citizens of Michigan.

Senator Prusi has led discussions on the bills and he and his colleagues are working together to shepherd them through the process. Their comments on the package follow:

- “*The intent of today’s action is to strengthen Michigan’s emergency management and homeland security efforts,” said Rep. Chris Kolb (D-Ann Arbor). “ By improving communication and coordination amongst our state’s fire fighting services, we can better protect lives and safeguard property.”*
- “*Those of us involved with the creation of the new bureau are excited about the potential improvements and enhancements to firefighting services in our state,” said State Fire Marshall Andy Neumann. “Michigan’s firefighters, fire chiefs, and fire service personnel will stop at nothing to safeguard the lives and property of our citizens.”*
- “*We look forward to working with the Legislature on their package of bills to codify the newly created Bureau of Fire Services,” said Paul Hufnagel, with the Michigan Fire Service Coalition which represents the members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union, the Michigan*

Highlights of Legislative Package

- Establishes the Bureau of Fire Services within DLEG and transfers the duties of the State Fire Marshall to the newly established office.
- Recognizes the act creating the Arson Strike Force Unit.
- Transfers the Fire Fighting Training Council to the newly created Bureau of Fire Services.
- Requires that local units of government apply to the Bureau of Fire Services for permits to process fireworks.
- Provides tort damage immunity to firefighting instructors.

Association of Fire Chiefs, Michigan Fire Inspectors Society, Michigan Fire Service Instructors, and the Michigan State Firemen’s Association. “We are thankful of the efforts of the Granholm Administration and the Legislature in making fire services a priority in Michigan.”

The 25-bill package is expected to see legislative action in both the House and Senate by mid-May.

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How to Contact My Office

I hope you find the information in this newsletter to be useful. Please feel free to contact my office if I can ever be of any assistance to you on a particular area of interest or concern.

Lansing Office

Senator Mike Prusi
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Phone: 517-373-7840
Fax: 517-373-3932
Toll-Free: (866) 305-2038

District Office

Mr. Paul Tesanovich,
District Director
Phone: (906) 524-4551

E-Mail

senmprusi@senate.michigan.gov

Website

www.senate.mi.gov/prusi

Cable Show Information

Available on your local public access cable station from Charter Communications. Check the local listings for dates and time.

Senator Prusi is the Minority Vice Chair (MVC) of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

He serves on the Capital Outlay (MVC), Commerce, Labor, & Economic Development (MVC), Judiciary & Corrections, and Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittees

Clip & Save



State Senator
Mike Prusi

P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536



May 2006

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Wildlife Habitat Issues

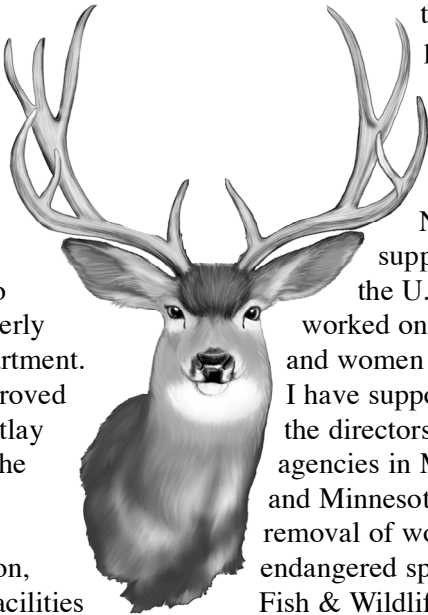
Whitetail deer management has been spotlighted in recent U.P. news reports, especially after hundreds of sportsmen and women protested current Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)/Natural Resources Commission (NRC) management practices outside of a U.P. NRC Wildlife Habitat Committee meeting in Marquette in January. I have also raised concerns over the future of hunting in the U.P., especially with regard to keeping young people interested in our deer hunting and fishing heritage. While my legislative committee schedule in Lansing did not permit me to attend, I did have a representative there on my behalf.

First and foremost, in an attempt to address concerns expressed with regard to the Deer Range Improvement Program (DRIP), I would like to explain that the program earmarks \$1.50 from every deer hunting license sold in Michigan for the purpose of improving and maintaining habitat for deer and for land acquisition, focused primarily on the U.P. Numerous projects have been funded since the program’s inception, including the purchase of thousands of acres of critical deer range and improvement of numerous acres of public lands through habitat management and timber cuttings that benefit deer and other wildlife species. One of the more recent expenditures of DRIP funds by the MDNR was the purchase of a 600-acre parcel of winter deeryard habitat in the U.P. near Hulbert.

Governor Granholm’s executive budget recommendation for Fiscal Year 2005-2006 proposed \$3.5 million in DRIP funding earmarked for the acquisition of new deer habitat. According to the MDNR, the current DRIP fund

balance is approximately \$6.0 million. MDNR had requested \$3.5 million of that amount to finance selected deeryard and habitat improvement opportunities. While DRIP funding comes directly from license revenue, it is ultimately subject to legislative approval to ensure funds are properly allocated by the Department. DRIP funding, as approved within the Capital Outlay budget, provides for the financing, planning, acquisition, construction/renovation, and maintenance of facilities used by state agencies, public universities, and community colleges.

For FY 2006, the Senate-passed version of the Capital Outlay budget included a \$3.5 million appropriation for DRIP. While I fought to maintain adequate funding for deer range improvements, unfortunately, the funding did not survive year-end negotiations. I did, however, support final passage of SB 236 (now Public Act 297 of 2005) because it also contained funding for other U.P. projects I had included in the bill, such as \$10 million for infrastructure upgrades and maintenance at Michigan Tech, \$5.8 million in matching funds for Bay College to build a west campus in Iron Mountain, funding for the Houghton Transportation Maintenance garage, and numerous road, harbor, and airport maintenance projects across the peninsula. I am committed to working with my colleagues to locate resources to restore DRIP funding in the 2006-2007 Fiscal Year.



Aside from purchasing land for deeryards, I agree with sportsmen’s groups across the U.P. that a number of other problems impacting our whitetail deer herd need to be addressed. I actively opposed the proposed NRC/MDNR ban on supplemental feeding in the U.P. in 2003-2004, and worked on behalf of sportsmen and women to overturn that ban. I have supported action taken by the directors of natural resource agencies in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota to request the removal of wolves from the endangered species list by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, in order for them to be properly managed at the state level. While USF&WS has not yet authorized Michigan to do so, they are currently preparing new Midwest boundaries to reclassify areas where the wolf population has recovered, enabling wildlife professionals to manage wolves in a scientific, biologically sound manner.

A number of other suggestions have been presented by groups such as U.P. Whitetails regarding whitetail deer management, such as limiting hunters to one buck per year, adopting voluntary “Let ’em go, Let ’em grow” techniques, shortening the end of the whitetail season, mandatory registration, and increasing bear tags. Active participation by hunters helps to ensure proper action when critical wildlife management decisions are made. Therefore, I encourage sportsmen and women to continue voicing their concerns. Testimony and public comments can be submitted to the Natural Resources Commission by phone at 517-373-2352 or by e-mail at glodent@michigan.gov.